

# Abacus Primary School

## Newsletter 555

### 24 / 1 / 25



What a pleasure it was to accompany 46 children from Year 5 to the O2 on Monday where they sang alongside over 8500 children from across the country as part of the Young Voices choir.



Next week we will be on WEEK 3





It was wonderful to see the children enjoy the Young Voices experience so much. They got to perform alongside the special guests which included MC Grammar, Tommy Blaize and Souparnika Nair. Thank you to all the family members who came along to watch and support the children.



Well done to Posie and Rose for their achievements in gymnastics and ballet.





Mrs Ferrari and Mrs Smith are busy planning a range of activities for Children's Mental Health Week, which will be taking place during the week beginning 3rd February 2025. The theme for 2025 is **Know yourself, Grow yourself**. On Friday 7th February 2025 we will be holding a 'know yourself, grow yourself' day

where we invite children to dress in a way that tells us something about them (or if they don't want to take part then please wear school uniform as usual). This could be their favourite colour, favourite outfit, what they want to be when they are older, a hobby or culture and the list could go on. If you would like to know more about the Place2Be charity and their work around children's mental health copy and paste the link below:

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk>



We have been totally blown away by the number of designs we have received for the Waddle on Sea penguin and also the creativity in the designs. Our Young leaders (with the help from Kids with Bricks, Sign Language club and a number of staff members) had the challenge of voting to get to our final three entries. These will now be sent to all classes so that the whole school is included in the final design...we will update you next week on the winning design.

## Cross Country Competition

On 23rd January 2025, 33 children from years 3-6 took part in the Wickford Cross Country competition which is part of the School Games initiative.









The event was attended by 5 schools altogether and we were very lucky that the rain held off for our races. Our year 3 and 4 children ran a distance of 1000m while year 5 and 6 ran 1500m.

All the children put into practice their weeks of early cold morning training sessions, sometimes in freezing temperatures to complete their races and they should all be very proud of themselves for running the whole distance to complete their races.

We are still awaiting the full results and will update you next week.



## House Points

			
			
<p><b>2501</b></p>	<p><b>1774</b></p>	<p><b>2432</b></p>	<p><b>2511</b></p>

Below is a Focus on helping your autistic child to “unmask”

## WHAT IS 'MASKING'?



### WHAT IS UNMASKING?

**Unmasking is the process of removing or giving up masking and revealing one's true, authentic, and autistic self.**

WWW.ANDNEXTCOMES1.COM

## What Helps Me To Unmask

*@littlepuddins.ie*



Embracing Autistic Culture



Talking To Autistic Friends



Safe Place



Wearing Sensory Safe Clothes



Requesting Accommodations



Communication Cards



Stimming



Music on repeat



Spending Time Alone



Special Interest Items



Info dumping



Rewatching shows/movies

### Create Safe & Supportive Environments for Your Autistic Child

Create a safe and supportive environment for your child, one where your child will feel comfortable unmasking and free to be their authentic selves.

But how do you do that exactly?

Well, start by creating a sensory safe space, such as calm down corner, or by offering fidgets or other sensory tools that the child finds helpful.

You'll also want to focus on creating an inclusive environment. One where differences are celebrated and validated. That might mean tweaking the language you use, shifting your mindset, encouraging stimming and infodumping, taking a strengths-based approach to things, and never ever shaming them for their autistic traits.

You can also provide supports and accommodations for those times when using spoken language might be too hard to access. That might mean using visual aids, AAC tools, communication cards, or similar.

Another thing you can do is provide predictability and create strong routines. Big or unexpected changes can often be a reason why a child might mask so making the environment as predictable and routine based as possible can be super helpful.

Keeping those routines provide stability because they are predictable and familiar. The child knows what to expect and when. And when things are predictable, masking won't be as likely or as necessary.

For More Information



<https://www.andnextcomes1.com/2023/11/what-is-unmasking-in-autism.html>

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/how-to-unmask-autism.html>

<https://www.andnextcomes1.com/2023/10/how-to-support-autistic-children-who-mask.html>

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about HEALTH & FITNESS APPS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Physical wellbeing apps are useful tools for monitoring and improving our health. They allow us to balance nutrition, set goals, track our activities and sleep patterns, and motivate us to exercise. Nonetheless, there have been some reported drawbacks; this guide outlines some of these concerns and explains how to use fitness apps safely.

### LACK OF PERSONALISATION

Many apps take a one-size-fits-all approach, failing to account for the varying ages and abilities of children; a 16-year-old, for example, will have different physical needs to a child of 10. This can create unrealistic expectations and set exercises which may be too advanced for younger children or too simple for older ones.

### NOT DEVELOPED BY EXPERTS

Some fitness and wellbeing apps are developed by experts in the field – but a concerning number of them aren't. As such, these platforms may contain inaccurate information. They may present safety concerns by giving incorrect advice regarding physical activities or might include age-inappropriate content which would clearly cause more harm than good.

### REDUCED INTERACTION WITH OTHERS

Physical wellbeing apps can remove the social and interactive elements which physical exercise can offer – for instance, meeting people at fitness classes, at the gym or during any other such activities. Research has found that young people generally dislike this aspect of fitness apps, suggesting that they would rather exercise in the company of friends or other like-minded individuals.

### DATA AND PRIVACY CONCERNS

Fitness and wellbeing apps tend to collect a lot of personal information from their users, including name, location, date of birth, details of their physical health and more. It's worth keeping in mind that some of these apps may sell this data to third parties. We'd advise that any apps young people download should have the correct legislation in place to protect their safety and privacy while using the service.

### ADDITIONAL COSTS

While many fitness apps are free to download, the initial content is quite basic. Users will only receive more helpful content (such as new workouts, nutrition advice or a personalised plan) by signing up to a subscription or paying for extra features. This can incentivise users to spend money on the service – a cost which can quickly mount up.

### DEPENDENCY ON THE APP

While physical wellbeing apps can help motivate young users to manage their fitness, there's a possibility that – without being sent frequent rewards and reminders – children could start to lose their natural drive to be active. Young people may also become obsessed with tracking their exercise, health and eating habits; this can have negative effects on their mental and emotional wellbeing.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### EXERCISE AND SOCIALISE

Highlight the importance of children enjoying fitness activities with family and friends, rather than always exercising alone. Emphasise the fun they can have by interacting with others rather than solely relying on an app to maintain their regime. Remind them of the importance of staying active, as well as the benefits of doing so with company.

### PROMOTE POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

While we want children to be active and healthy, we must also ensure they don't become fixated on how they look and begin take things too far. During childhood and adolescence, the body is still growing and changing. It's vitally important for young people's wellbeing that we promote a positive body image and a healthy relationship with food, empowering them to make informed decisions about their diet and lifestyle.

### REVIEW THE APP FIRST

Before allowing someone under 18 to install a fitness and wellbeing app, check its age rating, read its reviews and scroll through its data policy, to ensure its suitability for younger users. You could also try it yourself, to see if it's appropriate for the child's particular needs and decide if you're comfortable with them using it. Ensure that any privacy-compromising features – such as location tracking – are disabled.

### USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

As with all apps, it's important for parents to familiarise themselves with any controls on the app and to use these on a child's account. The specific settings vary between platforms but – most commonly – these will relate to screen-time limits, disabling or capping in-app purchases, and managing social aspects or features which aren't age appropriate. By utilising these controls, you can help to ensure a child is getting a safe experience.

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Butherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



#WakeUpWednesday

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